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| <b>Title of Report:</b>            | <b>Supporting People Inspection Report</b> | <b>Item 11</b> |
| <b>Report to be considered by:</b> | <b>Executive</b>                           |                |
| <b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>           | EX0853                                     |                |

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| <b>Corporate Plan Priorities:</b> | <p><b>CP2 - tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District;</b><br/> <b>CP3 - promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities;</b><br/> <b>CP6 - increasing</b> the provision of homes that are affordable to those on low incomes.</p> <p>The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Corporate Plan priorities by:<br/> <i>Using Supporting People as an effective route to delivery of high quality and cost effective support to vulnerable people, in partnership with the providers of those services and the people who use them.</i></p> |
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**Purpose of Report:**

- 1) To inform Members of the outcome of the recent Audit Commission Inspection of the Supporting People programme in West Berkshire.
- 2) To brief Members on the action being taken to respond to the Recommendations in the Inspection Report.

**Recommended Action:**

- 1) That Members note the content of the report and approve the action being taken in response to the Recommendations.
- 2) That Members approve the funding of one additional post in the Supporting People Team to take forward the work required.

**Reason for decision to be taken:**

- See Business Case appended.

**List of other options considered:**

- See Business Case appended.

**Key background documentation:**

- West Berkshire Supporting People – Development of Five Year Strategy 2005-10 – Project Definition
- West Berkshire Supporting People – Performance Monitoring Report

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| <b>Portfolio Member:</b> | Councillor Phil Barnett  |
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| <b>Contact Officer Details</b> |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Name:</b>                   | Ian Gilders  |
| <b>Job Title:</b>              | Supporting People Manager  |
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## **Implications**

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- Policy:** Supporting People contributes to Corporate Plan priorities for Social Inclusion, Promoting Independence and Increasing Affordable Housing.
- Financial:** Cost of one permanent full time Supporting People Officer, costed mid-scale at £28,130 (including direct salary on-costs), from the purchasing budget for learning disability services, given that the Supporting People programme has reduced residential care costs significantly for this user group. Plus set-up costs £1,500 for desk, chair, pc etc. Plus central establishment costs.
- The performance monitoring report (available as a 'key document') describes the financial position for Supporting People currently.
- Personnel:** One extra member of staff proposed.
- Property:** Space for one extra member of staff in the Housing room at Market Street. This will be tight but possible.
- Risk Management:** We have a risk management plan for Supporting People, but see also Recommendation (12) in the Inspection Recommendations Action Plan appended. The additional member of staff would spread skills and capacity, thus mitigating the risks identified.

## Supporting Information

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 Supporting People is a major government programme, implemented locally, designed to improve the range and quality of supported housing and other forms of 'housing related support' such as 'floating' or visiting support. 'Housing related support' means help for people to maintain or develop their skills to live independently in their accommodation. It can be interpreted quite widely, but is *not* a landlord's normal housing management function, and it is *not* personal care.
- 1.2 Supporting People went live on 1 April 2003. It affects the whole range of vulnerable people who may need housing related support, including:
- Older people in need of support (including those in sheltered housing schemes, people who are particularly frail or have mental health problems such as dementia);
  - People with mental health problems
  - People with learning disabilities
  - People with physical or sensory disabilities or chronic illnesses, including HIV/AIDS
  - Homeless people, whether single or families, and rough sleepers
  - People with drug or alcohol problems
  - Offenders or people at risk of offending, including mentally disordered offenders
  - Young people at risk and those leaving care
  - Women at risk of domestic violence
  - Refugees
  - Teenage parents
  - Travellers
- 1.3 The local authority, together with Health Service commissioners and the Probation Service, has become the commissioners of housing related support. With this come the new quality assurance responsibilities of monitoring and reviewing services provided.
- 1.4 Local authorities are required to produce a five-year Supporting people Strategy by March 2005. Currently we are working to the 'Shadow' Strategy produced for 2003/4.
- 1.5 Supporting People should mean:
- A more strategic approach to housing related support locally;
  - Improved range and quality of housing related support;
  - Integrated approach between different commissioners;
  - A systematic approach to monitoring and review of the quality and effectiveness of services.
- 1.6 West Berkshire has made very positive use of this grant, supporting the moves of over 100 people from residential care to supported living as well as securing a wide range of housing support services for all vulnerable people in the district - £6.1 million for 2004/5. This funds the services provided by around 30 different organisations to support vulnerable people. Indications from central government are that the funding will be substantially reduced in future years – possibly by up to 7.5%. An announcement is expected in November 2004 for each authority's funding for 2005/6 and 2006/7. Meanwhile West Berkshire has already secured significant savings in anticipation of a reduction in grant.
- 1.7 The Council also receives £159,000 to fulfil its role as the 'Administering Authority' for Supporting People. This is fully committed with the current staff team (3 f.t.e.), IT system and other overheads.

## 2. The Audit Commission Inspection

- 2.1 The Audit Commission is inspecting all Supporting People Administering Authorities over a three year programme. West Berkshire has been inspected at the start of the second year and as one of 19 authorities visited earlier than originally anticipated due to concerns over the high costs of some services.
- 2.2 The inspection report is appended. **The overall rating given is that the Council is providing a 'fair', one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement.**
- 2.3 This is a very creditable assessment, as West Berkshire's grant is higher than the government had originally estimated.
- 2.4 There are many positive aspects to the report and it is worth highlighting some of these:

*[An] enquiry on behalf of a woman with young children experiencing domestic violence was dealt with helpfully and very sympathetically by a member of staff in the council's homelessness department. Comprehensive, relevant advice on contacting Berkshire Women's Aid and their refuge accommodation was offered, along with the member of staff's name and direct line to make contact again if required. No attempt was made to deter the woman from leaving home, even though an owner occupier, or place any obstacles in the way, with the first priority being her safety. We commend performance in response to this enquiry.*

(Para 72)

*Partnership working is well established at a corporate level and in the planning and implementation of the Supporting People programme.*

(Para 77)

*'West Berkshire Supporting People team are head and shoulders above other councils where we work – they have kept us informed throughout, it's very difficult to fault them'. - Service providers.*

(Para 85)

*The two officers who undertake the reviews have a high level of expertise, which is demonstrated by the reports produced following reviews and reinforced by the views of the providers of services that have been reviewed.*

(Para 91)

*Reviews have already identified some services that were not delivering cost effective services in line with contracts and the commissioning body has acted swiftly to address this and realise substantial savings.*

(Para 97)

*The Supporting People programme in West Berkshire is delivering tangible, positive changes to some of the services it funds and through this, the lives of those people who use services. Visits to services and meetings with the people who use them during the inspection show that people place a high value on the support that they receive. Some people are being afforded the opportunity to live in their own home for the first time in their lives.*

(Para 102)

### **3. Recommendations from the Inspection**

- 3.1 The report also makes a number of Recommendations (para 14). Those with the shortest deadline are highlighted below, along with explanations of how we have dealt with these already.
- 3.2 *Ensure that where a Supporting People service gives the council cause for concern, action is taken to either move the service review forward, or undertake other appropriate action such as a formal validation visit. (immediate)*
- 3.3 This relates to a particular service the inspectors had concerns about, relating to the nature of the service provided (was it really eligible for SP funding?) and the cost. In response to our own concerns about this service, we have:
- Significantly reduced the unit costs on this service by agreement with the provider
  - Issued a default notice in line with the standard contract terms
  - Investigated the issues, including speaking to all the clients personally
  - Offered each client an alternative provider
  - Considered at the Commission Body whether to bring forward the service review, but the size and value of service was not felt to justify it, given the action we had already taken, and the need to focus our resources on the high risk, high priority, high cost areas.
- 3.4 *Agree priorities, achievable targets and resources for the development of the new five year strategy and produce a detailed project plan for production of the strategy. (July 2004)*
- 3.5 *Develop a rolling action plan that the commissioning body/core strategy group can use to detail their responsibilities in preparing the strategy, ensuring that actions have allocated responsibility for completion within agreed timescales and that this is monitored as a standing agenda item. (July 2004)*
- 3.6 This 'project definition' document has been produced and is available as a 'key document'. It includes allocation of required actions to the relevant people and the process for monitoring of progress against the plan.
- 3.7 *Strengthen performance management of the Supporting People programme by defining the role that councillors should play through scrutiny committee arrangements and by producing reports for commissioning body that analyse the data submitted by service providers in their quarterly performance returns. (July 2004)*
- 3.8 This relates to performance management of the SP Programme, both by the SP 'Commissioning Body' and by Select Committee. A first performance monitoring report to this end has been taken to both these bodies and is available as a 'key document'.
- 3.9 An Action Plan has been developed in response to the recommendations. This is appended and members are asked to approve it. Future performance monitoring reports would also include progress against the Action Plan.

### **4. Staffing of the Supporting People Team**

- 4.1 As well as the short-term actions, the inspection recommendations require substantial further work over the coming year and beyond. Recent guidance issued by central government also places further requirements on the SP Team. Hence, the appended Business Case puts the argument for the funding of an additional member of staff for the SP Team. This would also free up some of the SP Manager's time from more routine tasks, enabling fuller utilisation of his skills in developing the five

year strategy and managing the provider market, both of which are essential tasks in the face of likely government budget reductions.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix 11(a) - Inspection Report – Supporting People Programme in West Berkshire  
*(Please note that due to the size of this appendix a copy can be obtained from Anne Hunter on (01635) 519241)*

Appendix 11(b) - Supporting People Inspection Recommendations Action Plan  
*(Please note that due to the size of this appendix a copy can be obtained from Anne Hunter on (01635) 519241)*

Appendix 11(c) - Business Case for additional staff member

## **Consultation Responses**

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| <b>Local Stakeholders:</b> | A wide range of local stakeholders, including service providers, was consulted during the inspection, and gave very positive feedback.              |
| <b>Officers Consulted:</b> | Margaret Goldie, Corporate Director Community Care & Housing<br>Bev Searle, Head of Community Care & Housing<br>Kathy Turberfield, Group Accountant |
| <b>Trade Union:</b>        | Not consulted.  |